



## MEMORANDUM

Committee of the Whole

Agenda Item No: 1(D)3

**TO:** Honorable Bruno Barreiro, Chair  
Board of County Commissioners

**DATE:** August 23, 2007

**FROM:** Katy Sorenson  
Commissioner, District 8

**SUBJECT:** COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE  
MEETING

I am sorry that I will not be able to attend the Committee of the Whole meeting as I had previously scheduled family responsibilities, but I do want to set out several of my priorities for the 2007-2008 budget.

This will be a very difficult budget year due to the actions taken by our State legislature to limit our property tax revenues and our decision not to override. I recognize that cuts will have to be made, and I think that we as a commission need to set an example by responsibly cutting our own budgets, including our discretionary funds, in order to support other priorities, particularly services, in our County

One of our highest priorities needs to be our continued support for Cultural Affairs. We must restore all of the funding for this department's grants programs. The arts are an important part of our community – they contribute to the vitality of the community for our citizens and the marketability of Miami-Dade as a destination. They provide jobs for more than 22,000 people. These grants represent money well spent, as each dollar spent by the County leverages, on average, \$27 from other sources to support these important cultural events.

Our Parks Department also provides important programs and opportunities for the residents, particularly the children, of Miami-Dade County. We must protect the funding for Parks to ensure that our residents continue to have access to safe, well-maintained public areas for recreation and healthy programs for our children. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Money spent on parks programs is money not needed to address juvenile delinquency and health related issues such as obesity.

While there has been much discussion about an Office of Sustainability, we have not seen a position filled for this important office. Climate change will have serious consequences for Miami-Dade County, and we must be in a much better position to use all our natural resources wisely and cost-effectively.

We need to restore funding to the Community Based Organizations, which provide vital services to our residents. At the same time, we must ensure a comprehensive approval and evaluation process for these funding allocations based on priorities, performance measures and outcomes, so that our investments of tax dollars are used most effectively. So along with continuing to fund these CBO's, we must also restore a portion of the funding supporting the allocation and oversight process. Currently, the Department of Community Service is slated for a \$6.2 million reduction. The budget number will have to be adjusted if we are to effectively monitor these agencies.

It is also important that we restore funding for GSA, particularly their repair and renovation activities. Cutting these activities is penny-wise and pound-foolish. Maintenance of public facilities is an investment that guards against large expenditures that will become necessary without proper upkeep.

Along the same lines, we must continue our drain cleaning program along with other efforts to maintain our infrastructure. We saw very clearly in the recent tragedy in Minnesota, not to mention the debacle in New Orleans two years ago, what happens when governments do not make the necessary investments in the safety and security of their residents. When the General Obligation Bond was passed, our infrastructure backlog was slated at \$6 Billion. That number continues to grow and we must focus on addressing these critical needs.

We must continue to fund tree replacement and mowing in the rights-of-way. As a tourism-based economy, it is imperative that we maintain an attractive community that helps to foster pride in area residents and is appealing to our visitors. We must also continue to maintain effective and efficient Code Enforcement efforts.

We must restore funding to our Police Department to support their investigative activities and enhanced enforcement initiatives, as well as initiatives such as the Agricultural Patrol in order to meet the variety of needs throughout different areas of our community. Furthermore we must ensure that our officers are provided with necessary equipment and technology in order to best protect and serve the residents of Miami-Dade.

We must also continue to fund and support our ADA office and ensure compliance not only by our own agencies but countywide as well.

Animal Services plays an important role in the health and safety of our residents. We cannot cut the budget of this department while we continue to expect more service.

Our Corrections Department deserves state-of-the-art technology in order to operate our facilities in an efficient and orderly manner. We should continue to support them in this effort.

We need to support our Transit Department in their efforts to find more efficient and environmentally friendly fuels to run their vehicles. Again, this is an investment that will pay dividends in the future.

The Miami Art Museum, the Historical Association of South Florida, the Miami Museum of Science, and Vizcaya Museum and Gardens are important cultural centers and resources in our community that need to be supported.

The Medical Examiner's office provides an important service to families in a time of need. Delays in the response time of this department are unacceptable.

Instead of looking to eliminate services in the South Dade Government Center such as the tax collector, we need to look at making County services more accessible to our residents. Through relocating Team Metro from the Southland Mall to our own facility and cross-training opportunities with departments such as the tax collector, we should move towards providing the residents of South Dade with more readily available access to the services of Miami-Dade County. This will not only be a convenience for our residents; it will more importantly reduce traffic if people are not forced to travel downtown.

If we aspire to be a world class community, we must make the public investments necessary to encourage private investment and the prosperity that results. We can all agree that the citizens and residents of our county deserve to have their hard-earned tax dollars spent carefully in a way that meets the needs of our most vulnerable and enhances the quality of life for everyone. I hope that those who have been advocates for tax cuts will be able to identify appropriate places to make those cuts without affecting our most important services.

Thank you for your consideration.

C: Honorable Chairwoman Barbara Jordan and  
Members of the Board of County Commissioners  
Honorable Carlos Alvarez, Mayor  
George Burgess, County Manager  
Abigail Price-Williams, County Attorney  
Charles Anderson, Commission Auditor  
Kay Sullivan, Clerk of the Board